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ABSTRACT

Stories of living on welfare are told by five women and their children. Each represents a group of women who use Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The reasons these women have turned to public aid, and their means of achieving self-sufficiency illustrate why welfare policy and family policy must be redefined to account for the differences among recipients. Their experiences explode many myths about welfare. It is shown that welfare is not generous, and that families on welfare remain below the poverty level. Most women on welfare are not long-term welfare dependents; half of all women who go on welfare will leave it within two years. Contrary to myth, women on welfare do not keep having children to increase their payments, and almost half of all women on welfare turned to it after a divorce. The implications of proposed reforms for women and children are discussed. Changes are needed, not just in welfare, but in other areas of family policy to enhance family life and to provide real protection for poor children. (SLD)

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